

NORMANDIE HEIGHTS CONSERVATION DISTRICT

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PHYSICAL BOUNDARIES: bordered by 1300 East on the west and 1500 East on the east the district includes Harvard (1105 South), Princeton (1125 South) and Laird (1200 South) Avenues as well as Normandie Circle, Laird Circle and Uintah Circle. On the north it borders the southern edge of the proposed Yale Avenue Historic District and its southern border is composed of the southern edge of the house lots on the south side of Laird Avenue.

MAP:

The proposed conservation district comprising Harvard, Princeton and Laird Avenues between 1300 East and 1500 East is an architecturally exceptional area having a high concentration of large distinctive Period Revival residences, particularly English Tudor and French Norman styles built between 1926 and 1935. Many of these residences are associated with prominent and historically noteworthy personages of the period.

The district is unified by unique characteristics setting it apart from surrounding neighborhoods. Winding streets and cul-de-sacs are laid out over an undulant hill and hollow topography rising gradually from 1300 East to 1500 East. Streets are lined with cast stone lampposts and tall stately shade trees. The entrance to Yale Avenue from 1300 East is broad and park like, having a large central island with lawn and trees. Lots are consistently large and attractively landscaped, and the residences reflect exceptional quality and craftsmanship. They possess a similarity in various Period Revival styles and scale, coupled with individual design features. There is an atmosphere of tranquil seclusion due, in part, to the absence of cross traffic on 1400 East, which runs only intermittently in this area, and the isolating influence of the naturally wooded gulch of Red Butte Creek separating Harvard Avenue from Yale Avenue to the north. The district displays a remarkable consistency and cohesiveness, free of intrusive elements.

With the exception of a section of upper Laird Avenue, which was marketed as part of the Utah Heights subdivision (see map) the proposed conservation district coincides with the Normandie Heights subdivision opened by Bowers Investment Company in 1926. Owned by brothers Frank B. and George C. Bowers, Bowers Investment Company was a branch of Bowers Building Company, a contracting firm established by the brothers in 1916. Specializing in apartment buildings, but building private residences as well, Bowers Building Company had erected some 3,000 buildings in Utah, Wyoming and Nevada by 1946. Several Normandie Heights houses were constructed by the company; most however were constructed by a variety of other builders. While Bowers Investment Company owned and developed the property, lot sales were handled by other firms, principally Kimball and Richards, developers of the large and highly successful Highland Park subdivision in the Sugar House area of the city. Additional realtors included Ashton-Jenkins Company, Gaddis Investment Company and Le Grande Richards Realty Company, among others.

The opening of Normandie Heights was heralded with quarter page newspaper advertisements extolling the unique attributes of the tract. As an exclusive location hoping to attract an exclusive clientele Normandie Heights offered "surroundings of permanent, protected attractiveness", with "winding streets . . . an unsurpassed view of mountains, valley, lake and city . . . a neighborhood of homes differing from your own in design,

but similar to it in distinctive beauty" - obtainable at prices "lower than you may think." The developers promised a residential setting which would be "distinguished by out - of - the ordinary beauty" and an "intangible charm"; a place where ones neighbors would "include doctors, lawyers, other professional men and successful businessmen - a cultured class."

Commensurate with its reputation, Normandie Heights became home to a number of Salt Lake's leading citizens, as had the neighboring Yale Avenue a decade earlier. Richard Leo Bird, founder and president of the outdoor advertising firm of Bird and Jex Company, purchased a French Norman home at 1389 Harvard - later (1945-1953) the residence of Ezra Taft Benson, former Secretary of Agriculture and current L. D. S. Church president. 1365 Harvard was purchased by J. Fred Daynes, president, treasurer and manager of the Daynes Jewelry Company, a family firm established by Daynes' father in England prior to coming to Utah as an L.D.S. convert in 1862. Several firms were founded by J. F. Daynes himself, including Lincoln Optical Supply Company, Daynes Optical Company and J.F. Daynes Building Company. Among other early residents of Normandie Heights were A. Eugene Christensen, partner in the prominent W.E. Ryberg Construction Company; and Lawrence H. Heiselt of Heiselt Construction Company; and attorneys Edward F. Richards, Milton Backman, Parnell Block, and Frank A. Johnson. Thomas Eugene Gaddis, president of the real estate investment and insurance firm of Gaddis Investment Company, founded with N. L. Herrick in 1922, was a resident of 1465 Laird Avenue in the Uintah Heights section of the proposed conservation district. Attorneys, builders and corporate officials were particularly well represented in the district, and the balance of the area's residents were of similar stature professionally, being physicians, dentists, educators.

The impressive English Tudor and French Norman homes of Normandie Heights and the adjacent portion of Uintah Heights were the work of various builders, several of whom were active in developing this area. Four houses on Laird Avenue were built most likely for speculation by J.A. Shaffer in 1927. Shaffer, a former Salt Lake City real estate dealer, evidently moved to Indiana shortly after completing the Laird houses. Gaskell Romney, noted contractor in Utah, Idaho and California, was active on Princeton Avenue in the late 1920s. Born in St. George, Utah to pioneer parents, Romney began his career in Mexico prior to coming to Salt Lake City in 1921. A resident at 1442 Princeton in 1930 and 1469 Princeton from 1931-33, Romney evidently built at least some of his properties on speculation, using them for residences until finding buyers. He was also involved in the general development of Normandie Heights, securing street paving and the construction of water and sewer systems before the tract was placed on the market. Romney built the Yale L.D.S. Ward Chapel (1925), served as its bishop and served as a Salt Lake County Commissioner from 1929-1932. Gaskell Romney was the

father of George W. Romney, former president of the board of American Motors Corporation and former Governor of Michigan. Other noteworthy builders involved in the development of Normandie Heights included Samuel Cambell, Carl Buehner of the Buehner Block family, and the aforementioned Bowers Building and Investment Company.

A visually cohesive tract possessing a distinctive ambience, the area of Harvard, Princeton and Laird Avenues between 1300 East and 1500 East offers numerous individualized examples of finely crafted Period Revival French Norman and English Tudor styles characteristic of residential architecture of the late 1920s and early 1930s. It has been home to socially and professionally prominent Salt Lakers, a number of whom have attained historical significance. The area is thereby uniquely qualified for listing by the City as a conservation district.

SOURCES CONSULTED

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- "Normandie Heights," Salt Lake Tribune, April 18, 1926, sec. 1, p. 4.
- "Normandie Heights," Salt Lake Tribune, April 25, 1926, sec. 3, p. 8.
- "Normandie Heights," Salt Lake Tribune, May 2, 1926, sec. 2, p. 4.

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- "J.A. Shaffer," Deseret News, June 18, 1932, sec. 2, p. 4.
- "Carl F. Buehner," Salt Lake Tribune, November 11, 1935, p. 16.
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